
Lounger's Miscellany.

N U M B E R X V I .

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1789.

“ Thus pale they meet, their eyes with fury burn ;

“ None greets, for none the greeting will return ;

“ But in dumb furlinefs each, arm'd with care,

“ His foe profess'd ——”

DRYDEN.

IT is a received opinion, that the *duellum*, or combat between two persons, was originally a military institution, adopted as a mode of terminating disputes arising either from passion or affectation of superiority. That such an idea should be started is not altogether wonderful, it being natural for those who are bred to arms to be the first to make use of them: we are each more likely to succeed in that in which we have each been more particularly instructed. Allowing this to be a fair deduction, it must be admitted, that the mode of duelling at this day is not at all allied to the ancient usage; for, instead of being confined solely to the military, it has crept into several other orders of men, and

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is now practised by 'Squires, Attornies, Gentry, and Clergy: for this reason, duelling should be logically split into two heads, *viz.* ancient and modern; and as the circumstances of the latter come immediately under the cognizance of the times, it will be highly proper to treat of that only.

In my own humble opinion (for I am far from being a lover of contradiction); I say, in my own humble opinion, modern duelling could not arise from so pure a source as military honour, but had its origin amongst a people naturally ferocious and barbarous; perhaps, the northern parts of Europe, Sweden, Denmark, *et cætera*. It is well known, that these people spread like a torrent over Spain, Italy and France, and having no sociability from their nature, were frequently led into quarrels, which were as constantly terminated by the point of the sword.

Clovis is said to be the first King of France under whose reign the usage of duelling began. It was then lawful to settle all disputes with weapons, after due license first had of the king; and which ever came off victorious, was supposed to be in the right:—hence the term, "*l'épreuve du duel*." The last duel, that history informs us was thus licensed, was fought in the reign of Henry the Second, between Gui Chabot de Jarnac and François Vivonne de la Chataigneraie, at St. Germain-en-Laye, on the 10th of July, 1547. The oddity of the circumstances that gave rise to the duel, and the form of the challenge, are so singular, that for the entertainment of my reader they shall be laid before him.

"TO THE KING.

"SIRE,

"HAVING been informed, that Gui Chabot de Jarnac has
"been lately at Compiègne, where he asserted, 'that every man
"was a scoundrel and a liar who accused him of having slept

“with his mother-in-law;’ I take upon me, Sire, with your
“pleasure and permission, to tell him, that he is an infamous liar,
“and lies as often as he shall say I have uttered things I have not
“heard; for he has told me many a time, and indeed boasted,
“‘that he had slept with his mother-in-law’.”

Signed, “FR. DE VIVONNE.”

The challenge, having been duly signed and sealed, was sent to Gui Chabot, who accepted it, and sent the following petition to the king for his royal assent.

“TO THE KING.

“SIRE,

“WITH your pleasure and permission, I declare, that François de Vivonne hath told a lie, in imputing to me what was said
“at Compiègne; for which, Sire, I most humbly beseech you
“to grant us a desperate combat.”

Signed, “GUI CHABOT.”

The prayer of this petition being also signed and sealed, the combatants met by agreement, at a certain time and place, accompanied by their friends and acquaintance. The instant the parties had taken the field, the king, who had a peculiar inclination to see the issue of the duel, arrived with his nobles, and forming a large circle, gave orders to them to *set to*. Jarnac, who had been lately attacked by a slow fever, and who in consequence was much reduced in strength, availed himself of artifice, well knowing the superiority of his antagonist in that respect; thus, running furiously against him, he tripped him up, and with a back-handed stroke cut the sinews of his hams asunder. Victory was, by this means, as complete as it was easy; for the fortunate Jarnac having bestrid the foe, effectually prevented him from rising up

again, and muttering disdain over his ears, ordered his surgeon to attend to his wound. Pride, however, prevented La Chataigneraie from receiving the proffered assistance, and in four days after, a mortification taking place, death put a period to his painful existence. The king, who had come to the ground superstitiously confident of the success of the challenger, was so shocked at the consequences, as to publish an arret, purporting his displeasure at such meetings in future, and threatening punishment on those that durst offend against his orders.

Begging pardon of my Reader for this digression, which was totally intended for his amusement, by the introduction of what was most likely novel to him, I shall next proceed to canvas his attention to certain plans and schemes, which the love I bear my fellow-creatures, and more particularly my countrymen, has put into my head.

Those who have been engaged in these bloody encounters need not be told, that two men seldom meet together that are properly and completely matched. It is not, as in a cock-fight, necessary, that each person should be weighed and sized ere he be pitted against the other; the mere requisites are, spirit, pistols, and ammunition; with these three articles, almost all the duels in this country are terminated. But no man, who pretends to have one grain of reason, will take upon him to declare, that though custom has tolerated this, it is the more fair on that account. I will be judged by any one, whether a fat man has any chance of hitting a lean one, or a tall man a tiny man. Let the answer be what it may, experience has taught me, that you may shoot to eternity at a thin fellow without hitting him. A droll dog, who is a friend of mine, having heard me make the above assertion, agreed to fire a bullet at me for a shilling a time, at a certain distance pitched on between us. I accepted his proposal, and placing my posteriors



rriors full plump in his view, and my head against a barn-door, won fifty shillings of him easily. Poor Jack having lightened his breeches pockets by his loss, was for letting me take a turn at him; but the fear of shooting him, for he was confoundedly brawny, made me contented with my winnings, so palming the money, we sat down and laughed at our adventure. Few will require information on the score of my person, for they must immediately conclude I have very little flesh on my bones; at least, if they think otherwise, they may take this with them, — *there is no whipping-post in Yorkshire that is leaner.* But to return to my schemes: let the parties, like the ground, be measured by their seconds, and let the excess in the one be chalked off on each side his body, making all the bullets that enter without the mark unfair, and permitting such fires to be made over again. Here, indeed, there is some slight ground for objection, because the parts that are thus rejected are as susceptible of feeling as the rest. On second thoughts then, for they are proverbially the best, there should be an alteration for the advantage of the fat man: let him then be measured by a carpenter, no matter if he be an undertaker, who shall cut as much out of a deal board as the thin man is broad, behind which the fat man being placed will stand a very fair and equal chance. If he be too tall, he may be placed upon a cushion on his breech, or give him a stool that shall move him by inches, and then this difficulty will be adjusted. Spirits are indeed often wanted by either, or both, of the parties; should this be unfortunately the case, nothing is equal to the true Hollands, or right Coniac; though I had nearly forgot the true genuine British. A great deal depends upon the seconds; for, by their humanity and propriety of behaviour, many a worthy man may be saved, who, in the cant phrase, “has a wife and nine small children at home.”

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There is a story in circulation in the place of my nativity, of a very reputable linen-draper, who getting a commission in the county militia, must e'en take it in his head to finish his career by fighting a duel. The friends of the combatants, through a flow of affection, would not permit them to fire with bullets; so retiring to a field in the neighbourhood previous to the meeting, furnished themselves with a pocket-full of cow-d—g, with which they actually loaded. The linen-draper took the first fire, but with no effect: this being answered by the other, left the contents full spatter in his face, and the poor fellow is continually bantered with the phrase, "*I have set my mark.*" His neighbours too, who have very little compassion, tell him he is not *immaculate*. However, though it operated as a punishment, it saved his life; and therefore great praise is due to the seconds for their philanthropic scheme.

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